

Media Release

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Sustainable native and plantation Aussie timber and wood fibre is part of the solution as world phases out plastics

Australia's sustainable native and plantation forest industries are the resource solution to creating renewable everyday products from grocery bags to coffee cups, as the globe looks to phase out harmful plastic products, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Natasa Sikman said today.

"Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek has a leading role developing an international agreement to end plastic pollution by 2040 which is highly commendable given the hazardous nature of many everyday plastics. It was shocking to hear from the Minister that microplastics and chemicals from plastics are turning up in the human bloodstream, in organs, in breastmilk and in the placenta," Natasa Sikman said.

"The sustainable forest sector is playing a positive role in displacing so many plastic based everyday items with timber and fibre alternatives because they are better for the environment and our climate.

"The question the federal and state governments need to address is – if state based native forest industries in Victoria and WA are being closed down combined with a declining plantation estate, where will all the timber and wood fibre come from in the future to create these essential products Australians want and need? When you sustainably harvest native forests not only do you get the premium timber products like flooring, furniture and benchtops but the parts of the tree not suitable for sawn timber are and can be used for plastics replacements. We are talking about things like paper shopping bags, packaging products and cutlery – anything and everything that's made from wood fibre that has previously been made from harmful plastics.

"The sad answer is, the timber and wood fibre will be imported, and increasingly from places that don't have the rigid environmental regulations and sustainable forest management practices like Australia and are prone to deforestation. We have a world class sustainable forest products sector here and it stands ready to do more, not only to boost our sovereign capability and keep communities strong, but also to lead the world in best practice for the climate and environment by ending plastics pollution earlier than 2040.

"Australia needs to keep our sustainable native forest industries open, and we also need one billion new timber production trees planted to allow us to meet future demand for timber and wood fibre products.

"Australia's push for the world to phase out harmful plastics here and around the world will make us healthier and help the environment, but without sustainable timber and fibre supplies, the transition will be difficult to achieve. To phaseout harmful plastics properly

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we need strong and sustainable supplies of timber and wood fibre in Australia,” Natasa Sikman concluded.

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